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Q&A: Assistant Secretary of HR&A Jacob Lozada

In this issue, we speak with VA's highest-ranking Hispanic American: Dr. Jacob Lozada, Ph.D. He discusses one of his most important challenges—tackling workforce succession issues with an eye to diversity.



Q: What approach is VA taking to address the underrepresentation of minorities and women?

Dr. Lozada: Secretary Principi is a strong champion in support of minorities and women at VA, and that makes my job a lot easier. Deputy Secretary Mackay enables me to brief diversity statistics at his monthly performance reviews, and that also sends a powerful accountability message. The Department employs a multi-pronged, corporate approach to diversity that includes workforce analysis, accountability, organizational partnerships, communication campaigns, and youth programs. It's also important that we build an awareness among leadership of the pressing need to address underrepresentation issues.

Q: How do youth programs help address underrepresentation of minorities?

Dr. Lozada: The VA Youth Initiative is two-fold, including established student internship

programs and an innovative high-school program. Its goal is to increase educational and employment opportunities for minority youth by enabling them to work in VA facilities, attend workshops, meet with mentors, and learn about Federal careers.

I'm proud to report that the high-school program was prototyped at the Audie Murphy VA Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, with resounding success, and it is garnering a lot of attention. I recently briefed the VA Youth Initiative at OPM, and they described it as a 'showcase for government.' It's clear that VA is taking a leadership role in addressing underrepresentation by including diversity in its workforce succession planning efforts. And the youth program is one key. ■

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CELEBRATE!

Two Special Observances Take Center Stage

VA celebrates two observances during September and October: Hispanic Heritage Month and National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM).

The theme for Hispanic Heritage Month, celebrated from September 15 through October 15, is "Hispanic Americans: Strength in Unity, Faith, and Diversity." As the youngest and fastest-growing segment of our population, Hispanic Americans are an increasingly vital

part of the Nation's future. NDEAM's 2002 theme, "New Freedom for the 21st Century," reflects on workplace gains for people with disabilities while acknowledging barriers yet to be overcome.

For more information, contact National Program Manager Noemí Pizarro-Hyman at (202) 273-8921. Observance resources are found on the DM&EEO Web site.

Bookmarks

- National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/NIDRR
- National Museum of the American Indian www.nmai.si.edu
- National Urban League www.nul.org
- GH Award for Women in Government www.rci.rutgers.edu/~cawp/News/ghaward.html
- National Association of Professional Asian American Women www.napaw.com
- Hispanic Scholarship Fund Institute www.hsf.org



FIELD NOTES

News You Can Use

To join *NewsLink*, our free, weekly electronic news service, send an e-mail to dmeeo@mail.va.gov with SUBSCRIBE NEWS in the subject line.

Thanks to our *NewsLink* content partners for providing valuable diversity-related links:

- Access Board
- Business & Legal Reports
- EEOC
- *Federal Employees News Digest*
- FedNews Online
- FindLaw
- *Government Executive Magazine*
- HireDiversity.com
- *Hispanic Business Magazine*
- *HR Executive Magazine*
- Indian Country Today
- SHRM
- USAToday.com
- Washingtonpost.com
- *Workforce* magazine
- Workindex.com

Spotlight on Awards

Note these upcoming award events and calls for nominations.

Secretary's EEO Awards Ceremony

Sponsor: VA

Event: November 15, 2002, at the Capital Hilton, Washington, DC

DM&EEO helps to recognize people and events that contribute to EEO and diversity initiatives. Each year, we coordinate nominations for the Secretary's Annual EEO Awards Program, which is the highest recognition given to VA employees who have excelled in promoting or have made significant contributions to the EEO Program.

► More info: Contact Noemí Pizarro-Hyman at (202) 273-8921, or visit www.va.gov/dmeeo/eeoawards.htm.

2002 Henry B. Betts Award

Sponsor: American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)

Nomination deadline: October 4

The Henry B. Betts Award was created by the Prince Charitable Trusts and the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago in

1989 to honor one person annually whose "work and scope of influence has significantly improved the quality of life for people with disabilities in the past and will be a force for change in the future." In the past, the \$50,000 award has honored leaders in medicine and academia as well as disability activists and pioneers.

► More info: www.aapd-dc.org/docs/Betts2002app.html

Paul G. Hearne/AAPD Leadership Awards

Sponsor: AAPD

Nomination deadline: November 1

U.S. residents with any type of disability who are emerging as leaders in their respective fields are eligible to apply for \$10,000 awards to help them continue their progress as leaders. Winners of The Paul G. Hearne/AAPD Leadership Awards must demonstrate leadership achievements, a positive vision for the disability community, a continuing commitment to leadership activities, and the potential to contribute at a national level.

► More info: www.aapd-dc.org/docs/2002Hearneapp.html

SPOTLIGHT

White House Executive Order 13187

Executive Order 13187, The President's Disability Employment Partnership Board, was signed on January 10, 2001, to promote the employment of people with disabilities and improve their access to financial institutions and commercial enterprises.

The Board consists of business leaders, organized labor, service providers, and disability advocates appointed by President Bush, and it is funded by the Department of Labor. VA, along with other departments and

agencies, provides information to the Board so that it may carry out its duties to develop strategies and joint public-private efforts that enhance work and business opportunities for people with disabilities.

The People With Disabilities Employment Program page can be found at www.va.gov/dmeeo/programs/peopledisabilities.htm. There you'll find the Secretary's memorandum on employing people with disabilities, the CAP partnership, and more.

For More Info

To learn more about Executive Orders, visit www.va.gov/dmeeo and click on the White House Initiatives link.

INSIDE STORY

VA FY 2001 Annual Affirmative Employment Program Accomplishment Report

VA's Annual Affirmative Employment Program (AEP) Accomplishment Report has been revamped this year to improve readability and provide a more in-depth analysis of employment trends. Following is an excerpt of the DM&EEO publication.

Of the Cabinet-level Departments, VA has the third largest representation of African Americans, the fifth largest of Asian Americans, the sixth largest of Hispanics, and the ninth largest representation of Native Americans. Within this positive overall context, there is underrepresentation of specific groups in many of the 114 occupations with more than 100 permanent employees.

Of these occupations, 70 showed increases in the total proportion of women and minorities during FY01, generally less than 2 percentage points. While diversity increased in these occupations, there was not necessarily a decline in underrepresentation because groups already above parity tended to increase while underrepresented groups tended to stay about equal. The general conclusion is that VA is doing a good job of diverse hiring

but needs to improve the use of targeted recruitment to reduce underrepresentation of specific groups in specific occupations.

In SES and GS-14 and 15, the proportion of women and minorities is relatively small and declines as the grade goes up. Most of the employees in these grades are currently retirement eligible or soon will be, so there is a strong likelihood of substantial turnover in the next few years. During FY01, the proportion of women and minorities increased by more than 2 percentage points in grades GS-11 through 13, and by more than 1 point in grades GS-14 and 15. At the end of FY01, 1.57 percent of VA's permanent employees reported a targeted disability, well ahead of the government average of 1.2 percent, but showing a gradual decline from the 1.87 percent of FY96.

The full text of the *FY 2001 AEP Accomplishment Report* will be available online in October at www.va.gov/dmeeo/annualreports.htm. For more information, contact Lenore Jacobs at (202) 273-5866.

SPECIAL EMPHASIS

Audie L. Murphy Memorial VAMC: Texas Facility Launches Youth Program Pilot

"Young people need realistic insight into the world of work. We want to help motivate these minority students to pursue their education into post-secondary schools, and we hope VA will be their employer of choice." ~Secretary Anthony J. Principi



VA, in partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission, completed the first phase in a campaign to increase educational and employment opportunities for minority youth at the Department.

Fifty-three high-school students—most of them Hispanic American—completed an 8-week, paid work-study program at the VA Medical Center in San Antonio in July. According to EEO Manager Laura A. Faust, the most valuable aspect of this program was the experience it provided the students. "It allowed them to experience first-hand

the challenges and rewards of working at a VA facility."

Michael Ramirez, a Kennedy High School student who completed the program in July, says that participating in the program was particularly satisfying for him because it was a way to give back to the facility that cared for his grandfather in his last days. "It made me feel happy to help other people," he says. "Plus, I began to learn the responsibilities that go along with working."

The program is part of the VA Youth Initiative, which supports the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, addresses Hispanic underrepresentation and succession planning issues, and markets government service to minority youth. Additional programs are being developed in conjunction with Tampa and Baltimore VA facilities.

For more information on the Texas program, contact Laura Faust at Laura.faust@med.va.gov.

Diversity@Work

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Diversity Management & Equal
Employment Opportunity.
To subscribe or unsubscribe,
send an e-mail request to
dmeeo@mail.va.gov.

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COMING SOON

- ▶ State of Diversity
message from the
Deputy Assistant
Secretary for
Diversity
Management &
EEO
- ▶ Part 2 of our
interview with Dr.
Jacob Lozada
- ▶ Tips on using
special hiring
authorities
- ▶ More news, tips,
and tools

DM&EEO ONLINE

The mission of the Office of DM&EEO is to provide leadership in creating and sustaining a diverse workforce free of discrimination at the Department of Veterans Affairs. Here's a sampling of new

online tools that can help
you promote workplace
diversity and enhance the
employment of women, minorities, veterans, and
people with disabilities:

- *FY01 Affirmative Employment Program Plan*
 - *Guide to Conducting Workforce Analysis*
 - Coming soon: Online Speakers Bureau
- Bookmark our site; we're here to serve you.



2002 DIVERSITY CALENDAR

Pow Wow on the National Mall
Washington, DC
September 14-15
www.americanindian.si.edu

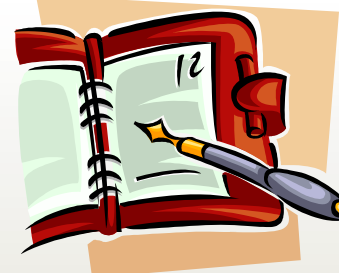
HBCU Week
September 15-21
www.nafeo.org/hbcu.html

**Society for the Advancement of
Chicanos and Native Americans in
Science Conference**
Anaheim, CA
September 26-29
www.sacnas.org

**National Disability Employment
Awareness Month**
October
[www.va.gov/dmeeo/
nationaldisabilityemployment.htm](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo/nationaldisabilityemployment.htm)

Disability Mentoring Day
October 16
www.aapd-dc.org

**SHRM Workplace Diversity
Conference & Exposition**
Chicago, IL
October 21-23
www.shrm.org/conferences



Looking ahead:

**National American Indian
Heritage Month**
November
www.va.gov/dmeeo/naihm.htm

Veterans Day
November 11
www.va.gov/vetsday

**Perspectives on Employment of
Persons with Disabilities**
Bethesda, MD
December 4-6
<http://grad.usda.gov/perspectives>

*For observance theme information
and more events, visit our Web site
and select the Calendar link.*